



It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes. Take Your First Step Today.

By Sam Kitching

**Member of the National Diabetes Education Program's
*Small Steps. Big Rewards. Team to Prevent type 2 Diabetes***

Five years ago, I weighed 260 pounds. A friend of mine, a retired doctor, had been telling me for years that I needed to lose some weight because I was setting myself up for health problems down the road. He told me, "Sam, I've got to be straight. Either you lose a little weight, or you are on your way to a heart attack or diabetes."

I knew that at my age I was at a higher risk for diabetes. I'd taken care of my mother as diabetes robbed her of her sight. I didn't want that to happen to me and my wife. I knew my doctor was right. But I thought it was too late for me. I was wrong.

I learned that diabetes prevention is possible, it's proven, and it's powerful. And it's especially powerful for people over 60. We just have to take the first step.

Now, at 67, I consider myself a diabetes prevention success story. I lost more than 60 pounds and I'm enjoying a more active and healthy life. I take the stairs instead of the elevator. I hand carry mail around my office. Instead of keeping chips and cookies around the house for our grandkids to eat, my wife and I keep healthy snacks all of us can enjoy together. Rather than sitting around watching TV, we ride our bikes around our neighborhood.

And I've committed myself to spreading the word. Every chance I get, I tell my friends that it's not too late for them just because they are getting older. I tell them that eating healthy and moving more doesn't have to be

hard or boring. I tell them to find something fun: try new recipes, take a walk with a buddy. Move around – even a few minutes a day at first is a great start.

I'm working with the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP), serving as a spokesperson for their prevention campaign for older adults, "*It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes: Take Your First Step Today.*" The campaign offers tips to help adults age 60 and over begin taking small steps to lead a healthier life. Like:

- Get off the bus one stop early, if you are in a safe place to walk.
- Try walking around the house while you talk on the phone.
- When eating out, share large portions.

Believe me, if I can do it, anyone can. You don't need to knock yourself out. Find fun ways to be active with people you care about, like taking an exercise class at your local YMCA or walk around a museum or the zoo. Small steps lead to big rewards. It's worth it. Take your first step today.

For more tips on how you can prevent type 2 diabetes, visit www.ndep.nih.gov or call 1-800-438-5383 and ask for the "It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes" tip sheet.

Sam Kitching, 67, is director of volunteer services at Northeast Florida State Hospital. As a member of the National Diabetes Education Program's Small Steps. Big Rewards. Team to Prevent type 2 Diabetes, Kitching is leading by example to let older adults know that "It's Not Too Late to Prevent type 2 Diabetes." The National Diabetes Education Program is a joint program of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.